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Committee for Programme and Coordination

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Agenda item 9

Adoption of the report of the Committee on its
forty-third session

Rapporteur: Mr. Jerry Kramer (Canada)

Addendum

Programme questions: proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005

(Item 4 (a))

Section 2

General Assembly affairs and conference services

1. At its 10th and 11th meetings, on 17 June 2003, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered section 2, General Assembly affairs and conference services, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005 (A/58/6 (sect. 2)).
2. The representative of the Secretary-General introduced section 2 and responded to queries raised during the Committee's consideration of the budget section.

Discussion

3. General support was expressed for the reform measures undertaken by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management in New York and for the intentions of the Department management to undertake, in consultation with the management of regional headquarters, a comprehensive management review of the conference services at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi. Further steps in the introduction of new technologies should be actively pursued by the Department in order to achieve greater efficiency, productivity and quality of services.



4. Improvements in the results-based presentation, such as the introduction of targets for performance measurement, were welcomed. It was pointed out that many of the expected accomplishments and indicators of achievements did not fully reflect the changes being pursued. Some of the performance indicators were subjective, especially where surveys were used, and not always sufficiently interrelated, in particular between areas of executive direction and management and programme of work. It was important to reflect the need to improve productivity and efficiency and to assess cost-effectiveness. In the meantime, concern regarding the need to comply with the existing workload standards was expressed. The lack of targets and measurements for past bienniums with respect to some of the indicators of achievement was noted. Views were expressed that some of the identified external factors were in fact internal and, as such, their management was within the prerogative of the Secretary-General. Efforts by the Department to identify outputs that were of obsolete, marginal usefulness and ineffective in nature were noted. It was suggested that records of proceedings could also be subject to such review.

5. Views were expressed that the proposals for integration of the secretariats of the Fifth and Sixth Committees into the Department and the discontinuation of the production of the *Repertory of Practice of United Nations Organs* had not been mandated and that those proposals would require further review and action by the General Assembly. It was also noted that the integration of the secretariat of the Sixth Committee under section 2 had not yet been accepted by members of the Sixth Committee. Views supporting the integration were also voiced. It was further noted that the proposals in relation to library activities made in the context of section 2 were not in line with directives of the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005. The suggestion was made that those activities would be better placed in section 28 of the proposed programme budget.

6. It was noted that the budget proposal made no provision for conference-servicing of legislative organs of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa. Views were expressed that the United Nations had a continuing commitment to provide such services to the Conventions within the context of the institutional linkage between the United Nations and the Conventions initially endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolutions 50/115 of 20 December 1995 and 52/198 of 18 December 1997, respectively.

7. Views were expressed that the issue of a comprehensive solution for providing conference services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States had not been addressed within the proposed programme and that the relevant proposals had yet to be submitted by the Secretary-General in line with provisions of General Assembly resolution 57/283 B of 15 April 2003.

8. The efforts by the Secretary-General to strengthen the United Nations Office at Nairobi in the context of section 2 were noted. A view was expressed that those efforts should continue on a consistent and comprehensive basis in line with relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

Conclusions and recommendations

9. The Committee took note of the proposal to integrate the technical secretariats of the Fifth and Sixth Committees into the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management of the United Nations Secretariat, and recommended that the proposal be further considered in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005 by the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session.
10. With regard to paragraph 2.5, the Committee observed that the proposal concerning the library services should be considered by the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005.
11. The Committee noted that measures to improve the performance of conference-servicing that are being implemented at Headquarters, consequent to an internal comprehensive review of Headquarters and the adoption of General Assembly resolutions 57/283 B of 15 April 2003 and 57/300 of 20 December 2002, are intended to be applied to other duty stations, and recommended that the Assembly request the Secretary-General to proceed accordingly, in accordance with his proposal set out in paragraph 2.7 of section 2 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005.
12. The Committee urged that the quality of the services provided by the Department be improved and that this concern be better reflected in the proposed expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement. Concerning subprogramme 4, Interpretation, meeting and publishing services, General Assembly and conference management, New York, in paragraph 2.43, in particular, the Committee regretted the absence of indicators of achievement and performance measures relating to the timeliness of production and distribution of parliamentary documentation in the six official languages of the Organization.
13. The Committee noted with concern the lack of supporting narrative for the upward reclassifications of staff proposed in this section.
14. The Committee noted that while many of the measures being taken are aimed at improving efficiency and productivity, few of the expected accomplishments and none of the indicators of achievement refer to efficiency or productivity improvements.
15. The Committee noted the statement in table 2.46, under actions taken to implement the recommendations of the Board of Auditors, that the Department monitors performance of language staff in relation to present workload standards, and recommends that, pending the adoption of new workload standards, this information be provided to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session and in future, in the context of its consideration of the programme budget.
16. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly approve the programme narrative of section 2, General Assembly affairs and conference services, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005, with the following modifications:

Tables 2.15, 2.17, 2.19, 2.22, 2.24, 2.26, 2.33, 2.35, 2.41 and 2.43

Add the entry "Increased productivity" both under *Expected accomplishments* and under *Indicators of achievement* preceded by the appropriate letter, with the entries above lettered or re-lettered accordingly.

Table 2.9

(a) Under *Expected accomplishments*, add the following entry:

"(c) Improvement of conference service performance in New York and all other duty stations";

(b) Add the following entry under *Indicators of achievement*:

"(c) (i) Optimization of use of technology in key processes;

"(ii) Updated proposals for workload standards, efficiency and related performance indicators;

"(iii) Issuance of updated bulletins of the Secretary-General that set out the relationship between Headquarters and conference-servicing units in other duty stations".

Table 2.13

(a) Delete footnote "(a)" and under *Objective*, in the first sentence, after the words "Second and Third Committees", delete footnote indicator "a";

(b) Under *Indicators of achievement*, add the following entry:
"(iii) Presentation in time of documents with full respect for the six-week rule".

Tables 2.17, 2.19, 2.24, 2.26, 2.33, 2.35, 2.41 and 2.43

Under *Indicators of achievement (Performance measures)*, replace the phrase "2004-2005: to be determined" with the phrase "2004-2005: 90 per cent to be determined".

Tables 2.15, 2.22, 2.31 and 2.39

(a) Under *Expected accomplishments*, add the following entry and re-letter the previous entries accordingly:

"(c) Improvement in the timeliness of the production and distribution of parliamentary documentation in the six official languages of the Organization";

(b) Under *Indicators of achievements*, add the following entry and re-letter the previous entries accordingly:

"The amount and percentage of parliamentary documentation produced and distributed in the six official languages of the Organization within established deadlines".

Paragraph 2.33 (a) (ii) d

Add the following activity element: "iii. Meetings of regional and other major groupings on the basis of existing practice, bearing in mind further

consideration of this issue by the General Assembly during its fifty-eighth session, in accordance with resolution 57/283 B".

Table 2.15

Under *Indicators of achievement*, within the text of indicator of achievement (a), after the words "relevant rules", add the words ", especially the six-week rule for present documents".

Table 2.17

Under *Indicators of achievement*, add the following indicator:

"(b) "Presentation of documentation on time, observing the six-week rule" and letter the preceding indicator "(a)".

Paragraph 2.43

In the third sentence, after the words "Official Documents System (ODS)", add the words ", without negatively affecting the quality of services provided and the quantity of documents required by Member States".

Paragraph 2.45 (b)

Add the following output:

"(vi) Meetings of regional and other major groupings on the basis of existing practice, bearing in mind further consideration of this issue by the General Assembly during its fifty-eighth session, in accordance with resolution 57/283 B".

Paragraph 2.46

In the third sentence, after the phrase "amounting to \$459,200", add the phrase ", without negatively affecting the quality of services provided and the quantity of documents required by Member States".

Tables 2.22, 2.31 and 2.39

Under *Indicators of achievement*, within the text of indicator of achievement (a), after the words "in accordance with relevant rules", add the words ", in particular regarding the six-week rule for issuance and distribution of parliamentary documentation simultaneously in the six official languages".

Tables 2.24, 2.33, 2.35, 2.41 and 2.43

(a) Under *Expected accomplishments*, add the following entry:

"(b) Presentation of documentation in time, observing the six-week rule", and letter the previous expected accomplishment "(a)";

(b) Under *Indicators of achievement*, add the following entry:

"(b) The degree of satisfaction expressed by Member States with the presentation of the documentation in time", and letter the previous indicator of achievement "(a)".

17. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly consider at its fifty-eighth session the issue of conference-servicing for the legislative organs of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa.
